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## CHORAZIN AND BETHSAIDA

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Of Chorazin it may be said truly we know no more than can be gathered from the scanty references in Matt. 11:21 and Luke 10:13. It was one of the spots near the Lake of Galilee favored by the teaching of Jesus; it was not far from the associated cities of Capernaum and Bethsaida, and it may be seen that like them it was an important Jewish center in those days. The early Christian writers, Eusebius and Jerome, describe Chorazin as two Roman miles from Capernaum, but the latter introduces an element of difficulty in stating<sup>1</sup> that it was upon the shore of the lake. This cannot however be intended as a strictly geographical description, for he says the same of Bethsaida which, if at et Tell, was at least as far from the lake itself as Chorazin. There is no possible ruin by the lake side which can be identified as that of Chorazin, while at Khurbet Kerāzeh, in an extensive ruin including the remains of a large synagogue some two miles north of Tell Hûm, we have manifestly the Arabic equivalent of the ancient name.

With regard to Bethsaida we have much more definite information. In addition to a number of references in the gospels, there is a good deal to be gathered from secular historians. Thus Josephus states:<sup>2</sup>

He [Philip] also advanced the Village (κώμη) of Bethsaida to the dignity of a city, both by the number of inhabitants it contained and also its other grandeur, and called it by the name of Julias the same name as Caesar's daughter.

In another passage<sup>3</sup> we read that—

Caesar (Nero) bestowed on Agrippa a certain part of Galilee, Tiberias and Taricheae, and ordered them to submit to his jurisdiction. He also gave him Julias, a city of Perea, with fourteen villages that lay about it.

It is expressly stated in other passages that it lay in lower Gaulanitis<sup>4</sup> and close to the Jordan.<sup>5</sup> Philip when he died there was buried with

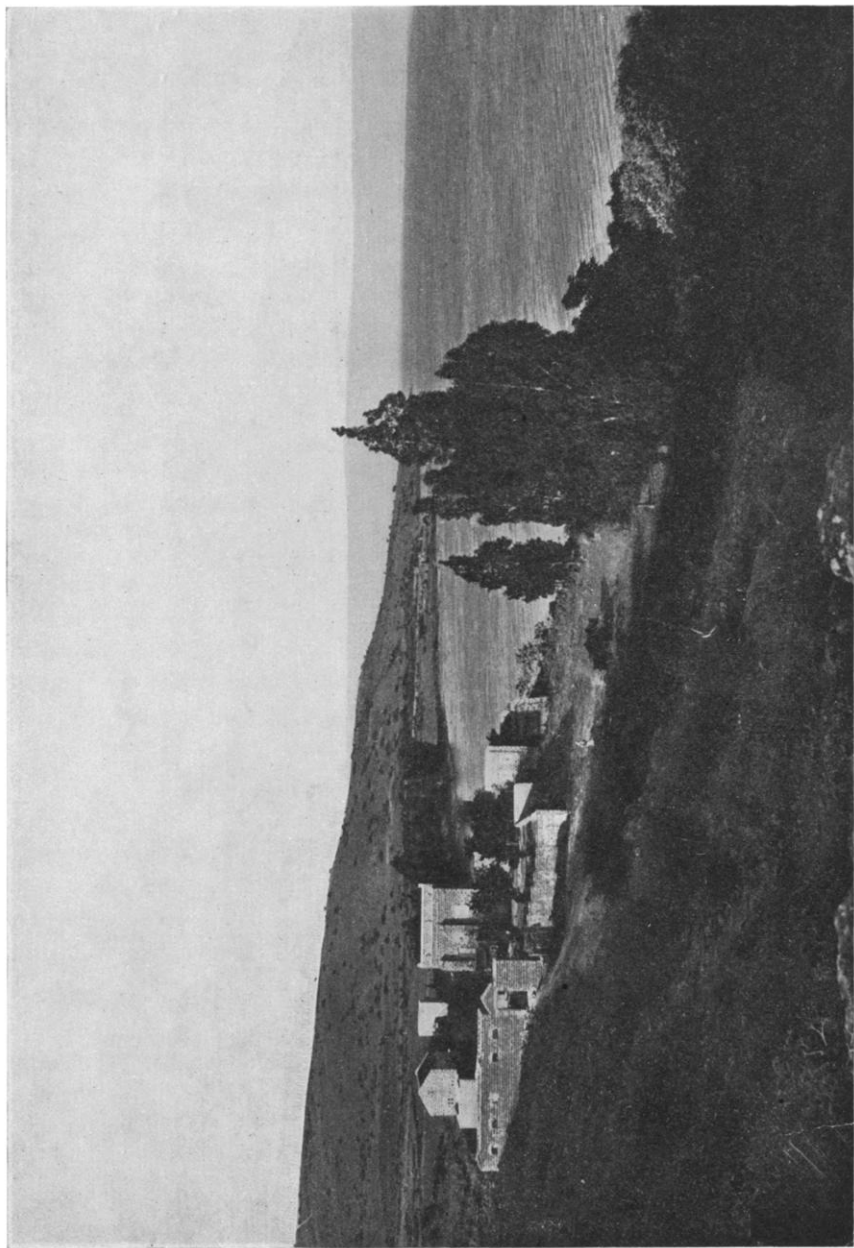
<sup>1</sup> " . . . lacus Gennesareth, in cujus litore Capernaum et Tiberias et Bethsaida et Chorazaim sitae sunt."—Jerome, *Jes.*, 9. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ant.*, xviii, 11. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *B. J.*, ii, 9. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ant.*, xx, 8. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *B. J.*, iii, 10. 7; *Vita*, § 72.



A VIEW OF TABIGHAH AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT  
The Buildings are those of the German Hospice

great pomp and "was carried to that monument which he had already erected for himself beforehand."<sup>6</sup> Pliny and Jerome both mention that Bethsaida was east of the Jordan.

The city thus referred to is without doubt that mentioned in Luke 9:10. As several villages appear from the above extract to have been associated with Julias, it is quite likely that the "desert place," the scene of the feeding of the five thousand, may have been a distant corner of its extensive domains lying, as has been often suggested, some distance down the east coast; in this well-watered district near the time of the Passover "green grass" would be present in abundance (cf. John 6:4, 10; Luke 6:34). This region being under the jurisdiction of Herod Philip, not Herod Antipas, explains (Matt. 14:13) our Lord's returning after the death of John the Baptist at the hands of the latter.

A Bethsaida situated east of the Jordan also suits well the conditions of Mark 8:22, for our Lord immediately after the healing of the blind man in that city comes to the villages of Caesarea Philippi which must have been, mainly at any rate, on the east side of the Jordan.

The passage which seems to imply the existence of a second Bethsaida is Mark 6:45, but as has repeatedly been shown, this is not necessarily the case. It must be remembered, first, that the site of the feeding of the five thousand may have been some little distance down the east shore, and secondly, that to cross to "over against Bethsaida" was most quickly done by boat because of the many inlets which interrupt the shoreway along the plain, el Bataihah. To cross a considerable bay and the mouth of a channel like the Zakeyeh—considerably wider than the mouth of the Jordan itself—might be described as going to "the other side." Besides, a similar expression is used by Josephus of crossing from Tiberias to Taricheae—both on the west side of the lake. They were to wait "over against Bethsaida," that is, I take it, close to the mouth of the Jordan but on the eastern side, ready to escort across the river their Master who was intending to join them by the land route through Bethsaida. They expected to be there first and to wait on the shore till he came, but the storm set in and made a landing at the Jordan mouth, and even at Capernaum, their headquarters, impossible.

<sup>6</sup> *Ant.*, xviii, 4. 6.

With regard to the expression Bethsaida of Galilee<sup>7</sup> used in John's Gospel it has been clearly shown<sup>8</sup> that the term may perfectly well have been applied to the city Julias. In a previous quotation from Josephus<sup>9</sup> we notice that Julias was, along with a certain part of Galilee, Tiberias and Taricheae, given by Nero to Agrippa II; it thus came under one administration. In 84 A. D., the east coast of the lake was definitely included in the province of Galilee and not many years later<sup>10</sup> (140 A. D.) we have the definite statement that Julias was in Galilee. If we summarize the facts we find: (1) The gospels make no clear reference to any second Bethsaida. (2) The probability that there were two towns or villages of the same name within such a short distance is very slight. It must be remembered that Julias is not a qualifying epithet but a *new name*. Only confusion is made by using the name Bethsaida-Julias, as if the names were used together. Probably the vast majority of the inhabitants clung to the Semitic name Bethsaida, leaving the new foreign name for use by the officials only. The survival of Baniyas (=Panias) while the name Caesarea-Philippi is quite forgotten is an example and a result of this custom. (3) There is no reference to, or any suggestion of, a second Bethsaida in any of the early Christian writers or pilgrimage records. (4) Archaeologically there is no site on the western shore which shows any remains of such a second Bethsaida. If there was such a place it must have been a mere fishing suburb of Capernaum, at, say, Tabighah.

With regard to the state of Julias there is a considerable unanimity of opinion; there is indeed only one possible site for such a city, namely, et Tell at the northwestern corner of the delta-plain, el Bataihah. It is true that Dr. Schumacher is often quoted as supporting the claims of the squalid ruin el Mes'adiyeh on the shore of this plain, but as he makes an equal claim of another shore-ruin el 'Araj this opinion cannot be worth much in his own eyes. The fact is, neither the situation<sup>11</sup>—it is far from the Jordan, nor the suitability of its site

<sup>7</sup> John 1:44; 12:21.

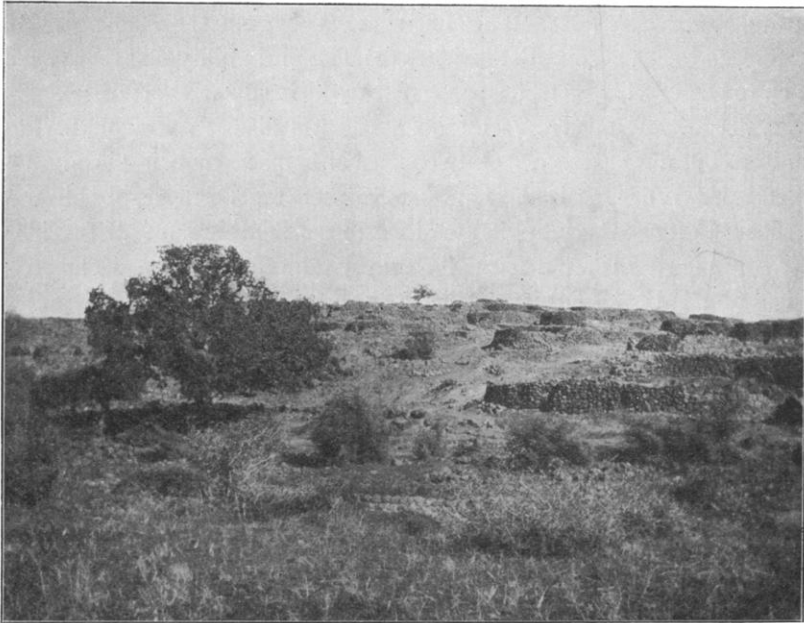
<sup>8</sup> See G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*; and Buhl, *Geographie des alten Palästina*, p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> *Ant.*, xx, 8. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Pliny, v. 1.

<sup>11</sup> "The ruins are unimportant, although extensive; the building stones are mostly unhewn. The place is surrounded by marshes and consequently unhealthy."—C. Schumacher, *The Jaulan*, p. 221.

to be that of an attractive and semi-royal city, nor its archaeological remains—which are *nil*, give it any claim whatever to represent the site of a city so important as Julias. The more we see of the sites of the old cities of Palestine the more sure we may be of the likeliness of one site and the impossibility of another; el Mes<sup>c</sup>adiyeh is an impossible site for a Judaeo-Roman city. It may well be the site of one of those villages which were bestowed with the city upon Philip.



RUIN HEAPS OF BETHSAIDA

In giving a description as I here propose to do of the two sites Kerāzeh and et Tell, I think the most satisfactory way will be to describe a visit to these places. They are both so seldom visited by even student-tourists that some account of how easily they may be reached may encourage Bible students to pay them more attention. It is quite astonishing how few who mention these sites in guide-books and accounts of the country have ever been there themselves.

The route followed was from Safed to Kerāzeh (3 hrs.), Kerāzeh to Tell Hûm (1¼ hrs.), Tell Hûm to the Jordan (1 hr.), Jordan mouth,

via el Araj, to et Tell (1 hr.), et Tell via ed Dikkeh to higher fords of Jordan (1 hr.), Jordan to Safed (4 hrs.)—in all 10 hours actual traveling which might be shortened a little by omitting ed Dikkeh and crossing the Jordan at the regular ford, in which case a more frequented and shorter way to Safed can be taken. Although the whole round can easily be done by a good rider on a long summer's day, yet I am in my account combining two separate excursions, one made in January, 1907, from Safed to Tell Hûm via Kerāzeh, and one made in June, 1907, from Tell Hûm via et Tell to Safed.

Safed is a very favorable center for exploring the greater part of Galilee. Its position is central. Thus Tiberias is but five hours, Banias but seven hours, Akka but nine hours away. Either Huleh or the Lake of Galilee can be reached within three hours' easy ride. For exploration in the neighborhood of the north shore of the lake, by far the most interesting point, it is very convenient. Especially is this the case with those wishing to make their investigations in the summer months when it is incumbent on the tourist to have a cool resort as his headquarters. Safed, 2,750 feet above the Mediterranean and about 3,400 feet above the lake, enjoys in the summer a climate almost as salubrious as the higher parts of the Lebanon.

The route from Safed to Kerāzeh for the first hour and a half is the same as that to Tabighah and Tell Hûm. The roads diverge at the ruined khan Jubb Yusuf—one of the Mediaeval Arab khans erected on the great Damascus Road. The Jubb Yusuf or Pit of Joseph, which gives its name to the khan, is a shallow pit on a low hillside, just behind the khan, which by a quite worthless Moslem tradition is claimed to be the one into which Joseph was thrust by his brethren (Gen. 37:24). From this khan roads diverge in many directions: that to Kerāzeh is to the north side of the hill behind the khan. A few hundred yards along this track we came upon a large encampment of Zinghariyeh bedawin, and soon after we found ourselves descending an extraordinarily rough track amid confused boulders of black basaltic rock. Indescribably bad as the road was, there was no question but that we were traveling at times on, at other times beside, an ancient highway which can be traced all the way to Kerāzeh. The descent that we took—there may possibly be a better one—for the last quarter of a mile into the Wady Kerāzeh was a sheer scramble down which few

but Syrian horses could have followed us. The valley bottom, down which trickled a sluggish stream, the result of recent showers, was full of great black boulders and rank marshy shrubs. Above us to the southeast we could see some confused heaps and walls, a part of the ruins of Kerāzeh. At first we wandered a little down the valley, as we had wrongfully gathered from the description in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Memoirs*<sup>12</sup> that some of the ruins were there. Finding nothing but rugged natural roads, we scaled the cliffs some eighty feet, where the valley makes a sharp turn round a rocky spur. At length on reaching the top of this we found ourselves on the highest point of the ruins. Near us were several houses which the bedawin, who make this their headquarters, have rebuilt and roofed in; among the stones are many which are well cut, and squared. A little below us to the east, in practically the center of the remains, was the ruined synagogue. To the southeast the ground slopes downward in a small shallow valley running southwest toward the Wady Kerāzeh; there the ground was thick with ruined houses, the majority of the stones being natural rounded masses but a considerable proportion long, well-cut pieces for doors and windows. It must not be forgotten in visiting such a site as this that the larger proportion of stones for ordinary house walls were used in their natural condition or roughly broken. Only the very best buildings were made of cut stone throughout. The ruins also cover a large area of sloping land to the northeast. Counting only what lies on the surface, the ruins cover some acres and are, as far as I can judge, more extensive than those of Tell Hûm. We found the traces of those oil presses which show that the neighborhood must once have had plenty of olive trees. There is a Muslem wely to the northeast with, as usual, a few sidr trees around. The synagogue is the only surviving building of importance. Herr Kohl did not excavate here, as the proprietor of the ruins demanded a perfectly absurd and unreasonable price for his permission; but enough lies on the surface to show what an important building it was. There was the usual triple gateway, and the dimensions appear to have been similar to those at Tell Hûm.<sup>13</sup> Very much lies under the

<sup>12</sup> *Palestine Exploration Fund Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 402.

<sup>13</sup> "It appears to have resembled the synagogue at Tell Hûm more closely than the others. The interior length is 74 ft. 6 in., with a breadth of 49 ft."—*Palestine Exploration Fund Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 401.

surface, but the many scattered fragments of elaborately carved stone over the site, and built with the walls of neighboring houses, show that the synagogue was one over which much labor had been expended. The result, however, could never have been so fine as at Tell Hûm because only the black volcanic rock of the district was employed. Among the fragments we found a carved lion. From the doors of the synagogue a fine view of the Lake of Galilee is visible toward the south. This, however, is the only touch of beauty. Today the neighborhood is dreary in the extreme. The Wady Kerāzeh, which makes a bend round the spur on which the city stood, presents today an unbroken surface of dull, black rocks unrelieved by a single green tree; the whole surface of the ground around is of the same dreary color. Looking about, I tried in imagination to see the hill slopes covered with terrace above terrace of clustering vines and the level slopes to the east green with olive groves; but the depressing reality so obtruded itself that I cannot recall the site of Chorazin as anything but cheerless and forbidding.

The learned Dr. Robinson condemned this site topographically without having visited it. He writes:<sup>14</sup>

The ruins consist simply of a few foundations of black stones, the remains evidently of a poor and inconsiderable village. They are known as Khurbet Kerāzeh. We did not go to them as there was no path and because they were in full view. . . . The remains are too trivial to have ever belonged to a place of importance. . . . The site is . . . shut in among the hills, without any view of the lake and remote from any public road whether ancient or modern.

This very unusual neglectfulness on the part of Dr. Robinson has caused a regular tangle of difficulties in New Testament topography. Had he visited this site he would have seen ruins even more extensive than Tell Hûm and the remains of a synagogue second in importance to that of the latter place; he would have noticed the one real attraction of the site, the magnificent view of the lake, and he could not have failed to trace the well-marked remains of the ancient, probably Roman, road. He would not, had he seen the ruins, have located Chorazin at Tell Hûm and made other theories in topography which have been so much quoted and relied on by subsequent writers. Sir Charles Wilson who visited the site at a later date gives a very different

<sup>14</sup> *Biblical Researches*, III, p. 347.

account.<sup>15</sup> He has no doubt about this being the site of Chorazin. We may today, I think, accept this site as one of the certainties of biblical topography.

From Khurbet Kerāzeh to Tell Hûm it is possible to follow the old (Roman) road which ran down the shallow valley, in which lay the southern parts of the town, and enter the Wady Kerāzeh. Near the mouth of the latter is to be found the Roman necropolis of Capernaum. Instead of taking this route we descended by a path down the steep, rocky hillside, reaching our goal in a little over an hour.

*Tell Hûm to et Tell.*—We left the Franciscan hospice at Tell Hûm at 11:30 and after riding for ten minutes through ruined foundations, we crossed the Wady Kerāzeh (here called Wady el Weibdah)—a rather picturesque torrent bed with rocky banks. In a quarter of an hour we reached the fertile little Wady en Nāshef, its center full of oleanders overhanging a number of small water channels. To the south there is a pretty bay where many cattle were standing knee deep in the water. Ten minutes farther on we crossed the Wady Zukluk on the lake shore of which is a Ḥāsel (a storehouse for grain, etc.) belonging to the Shemālneh bedawin. We here turned to the beach, passing the wely of Sultan Ibrahim, a tomb under two large sidr (acacia) trees. The sand hill along the shore is here a dirty grayish black, being the product of the decomposition of basaltic rocks. On reaching the Jordan mouth a friendly bedway, with his kamēs held well above his waist, escorted us over the ford which here lies along the bar and makes considerable circuit into the lake. The depth was sufficient to just submerge our stirrups. A considerable herd of young buffaloes lying in the water near our landing-place—looking from the distance like a crop of black rocks—all rose simultaneously as we passed them, to stare at the strange sight of “frangees” invading their domains. At the spot where we reached the shore the beach consists of a solid mass of white shells with which I, in a few minutes, filled one of my saddlebags. Just inland of the beach a considerable stretch of irrigated plain has recently been planted with orange and lemon trees. The young trees look flourishing. We skirted the shore to the spot el Araj, where there is an old Ḥāsel, two modern cottages, and some palms. This is suggested by Schumacher as the site of the “fishing suburb” of Beth-

<sup>15</sup> *Recovery of Jerusalem*, pp. 346, 347.

saida,<sup>16</sup> and though I had been there before I specially visited it to see what evidences were to be found to support such a view. I must confess there seemed to me to be little in favor of such a theory. Neither walls nor hewn stones in any numbers are visible. In this marshy delta marked changes must have taken place in the last 2,000 years, and probably the conformation of the low beach here was in New Testament times quite different from that which holds at present. We found neither Roman remains nor any sign of a Roman road, but even had there been it is difficult to see what bearing they could have on the site of city of Bethsaida. The fishermen, then as now, probably occupied temporary huts on the shore when engaged in loading or unloading their boats. At the back of el Araj is a stretch of marshy lagoon, which is crossed by a causeway of stones, partially submerged in the middle: it is a narrow path like a water channel, and admits of pedestrian traffic only; without horses we had to skirt the marsh for a boat ten minutes in a westerly direction till we rounded its western end. Thence we turned straight toward et Tell which we could see about a mile off. Our path ran for most of the way alongside a shallow irrigation canal, one of many with which this plain is intersected. Probably the constant alluvial deposits have buried all traces of the made roads which must have once run here. Harvesting was going on in places—it was June—and trains of camels loaded high with masses of corn swept over the plain in various directions; much of the rich lands, however, was given over to weeds. In just an hour from el Araj, by our very winding path, we reached the foot of et Tell. Running past the southern extremity of the hill is a well-trodden high-road, evidently an ancient route, parallel to which runs an irrigation canal from the Jordan. At the point at which we reached et Tell, the southeast corner, is a wely shaded by a terebinth and several sidr trees.

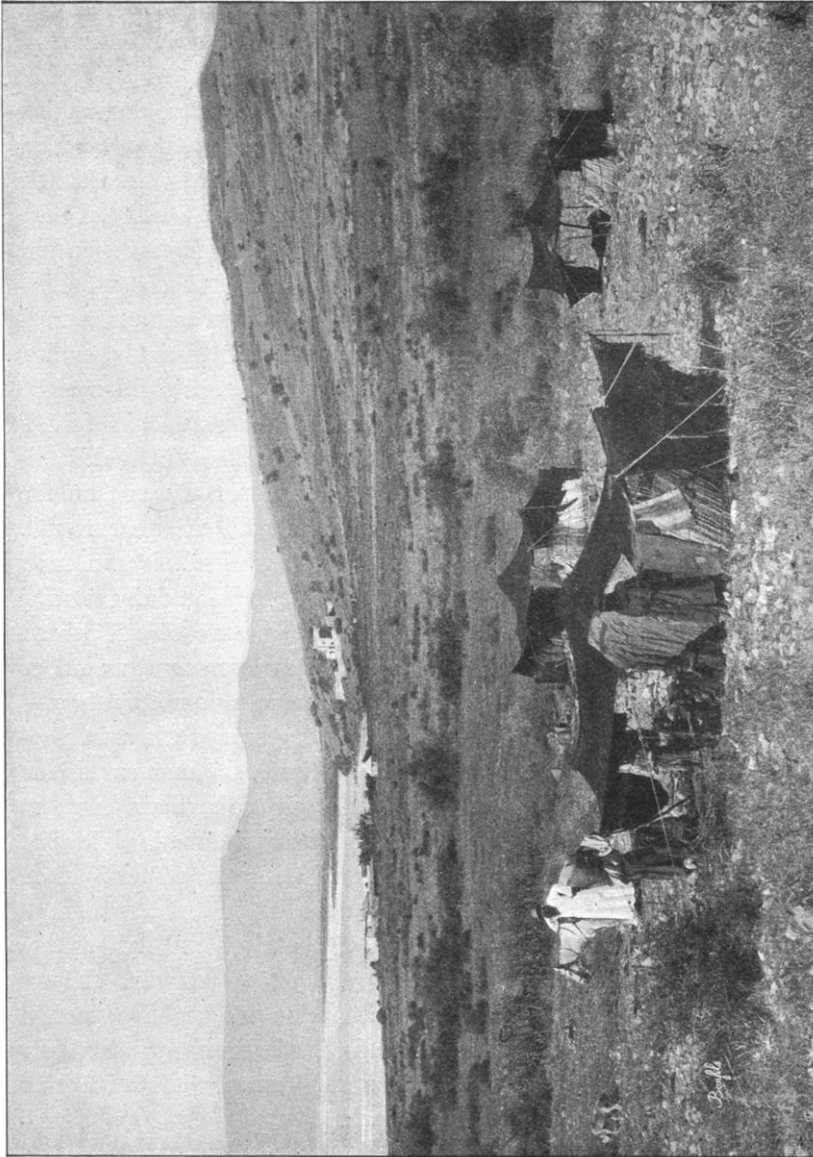
The tell is a fairly lofty hill, its highest point being some 50 or 60 feet above the surrounding plain. It is connected by a narrow lower neck with the hills behind it to the north, but the other sides rise steeply from the level ground. Its area is considerable, quite enough to have sustained a city of fair size—in Roman times. From end to end it is strewn with ruins and although we could find no carved frag-

<sup>16</sup> *The Jaulan*, p. 94.

ments, there is a large quantity of well-cut squared basaltic blocks. The south and southwestern slopes are covered with cattle sheds—four-walled structures with roofs supported by double arches. These are all built of basaltic blocks, many well squared, and over the doors are lintels of long and well-cut stones. Besides several dozen cattle sheds still in repair there are at least as many in ruins. No one now dwells permanently on the tell which, in addition to its use as a winter refuge for the cattle of the Tellawēyeh Arabs, is the cemetery of this tribe of mongrel bedawin. Their graves are scattered all over the hill both on the summit and around its sides. It is the headquarters of this tribe, whose name is derived from *et Tell*.

Thick clumps of tall thistles rendered our examination of the site difficult, but where vegetation had been trodden down the pottery fragments—Arabic, so far as I could judge—were lying thick. There can be no question but that this is an ancient site of importance which would well repay excavation; it is to be feared, however, that the numerous graves scattered over the best parts would be an insuperable obstacle. From many points of view the site is a suitable one for a city. It is one of the common type of ancient fortified posts—a hill isolated by nature on almost every side; such a site as this was probably a fortified town in pre-Roman times. Secondly, the site is a healthy one as compared with the intensely malarious plain.<sup>17</sup> Immediately we mounted the hill a refreshing breeze, not felt before, met us. The dwellers in the Bataihah marshes suffer from a most virulent form of malaria; no fixed population could flourish in this region. On the hill slopes, above the irrigated and marshy land, within reach of fresher air, life might well be far more salubrious. Thirdly, the site is one of great natural beauty. The view of the lake is one of the most charming I have seen; although we are looking at the lake from the northeast corner one receives the impression of being in the middle of the north shore—the whole of the sweep to the northwest around Gennesaret is hidden. The plain, shut in by an amphitheater of hills, even today is attractive, but when fully cultivated must have presented a sea of verdure. To the southwest the serpentine Jordan

<sup>17</sup> The whole Jordan valley is unhealthy, but in the northern part the two worst spots are the shores of the Huleh and the plain *el Bataihah*. Here a large proportion of the inhabitants have enormous spleens and even "black water fever" occurs.



THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE NEAR BETHSAIDA

winds its way through a wide plain of green foliage, while almost due west—between et Tell and the Jordan—is a mass of trees and shrubs. The low hills to the north, now so bare, were doubtless in the days of the city's habitation covered thick with olive trees. Many "wild" olives and figs may be seen today. Then such a city, dominating such a region of rich agricultural possibilities, must have been wealthy. There is no sign in the whole plain of any rival—Julias was evidently the chief city of the district: the fourteen villages which we read were given with it to Agrippa were very probably to some extent dependent on it, the chief city of the district. Today the neighborhood produces barley, wheat, maize, gourds and melons, as well as walnuts, pomegranates, olives, figs, oranges, lemons, sycamore figs, and prickly pears.<sup>18</sup> An equally important source of wealth must have been its position as the distributing center of fish all over Galilee. Today the chief fishing grounds on the lake are not at Tiberias nor at Tabighah but at el Bataihah. The fishing at the two former places depends much on the season: at the last good fishing is obtainable all the year round. From the shores of this delta and from the Jordan itself fish are daily taken in large numbers. Loads of fish come up to Safed daily, passing close to the foot of et Tell. It is true that because of the private ownership of the plain by a Moslem effendi at Damascus, as well as the untrustworthiness of the bedawin, the fishermen do not live here—their homes are at Tiberias and they make temporary shelters in reed-huts along the shore. If, however, at any time fishermen came here with their families they would unquestionably make their home at et Tell, if they were allowed to do so. With good roads el Araj or the Jordan mouth could be reached in half an hour and the Jordan, at the ford, in half that time. Bethsaida could never have been, as some have suggested, half on one side of the river and half on the other, if et Tell were the site; it is much too far away. I have endeavored to make it clear that Bethsaida might have been a place of fishing, i. e., the center of the fishing industry for practically all Northern Galilee, and the home of the fishermen, without its being situated upon the miasmic sea shore itself.

<sup>18</sup> For an interesting description of this plain see *The Jaulan*, pp. 106, 107. Schumacher gives its greatest length as four miles; its breadth in the center as 1½ miles.

*Et Tell to Safed.*—At the southwest angle of the tell, near a beautiful jamēz (sycamore fig), is a copious fountain.<sup>19</sup> The main road runs past this due west to the ford and thence to Safed. We took a road to the right past the jamēz, crossed a rocky spur where were camped some bedawin, and then traversed a beautiful lane shaded by fruit-trees and cacti. To our left lay several mills half hidden in luxuriant foliage, and no less than five mill streams, tier above tier, ran parallel with our road. We turned north and ascended the Valley of the Jordan, the noisy stream winding by many channels through masses of willows and oleanders a considerable distance below us. At length we reached ed Dikkeh, and examined the carved stones, the remains apparently of a synagogue.<sup>20</sup> Leaving ed Dikkeh under the guidance of a young bedawy, we crossed the Jordan, here divided into no less than eight streams, several of them rapid and wide and almost all with slippery, stony bottoms. On the farther bank we soon found a path—narrow but well marked throughout—leading to Safed. The first hour and a half we gradually ascended along and up the western side of the Jordan Valley; the river itself was, however, hidden in a deep and narrow bed between steep banks. After crossing the edge of the Ghōr we saw before us the Safed hills, toward which we made a direct course, reaching our destination just four hours after crossing the Jordan ford.

<sup>19</sup> This apparently is called ʿAin et Tell; it is not the large spring ʿAin et Musmar, mentioned by Schumacher; this lies farther east. We crossed a considerable stream flowing westward to the Jordan before we reached the tell.

<sup>20</sup> I think it is worth considering that these remains, which today are a mere jumble of fragments, may possibly have been carried off at one time from et Tell.